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Tales from the Great Book

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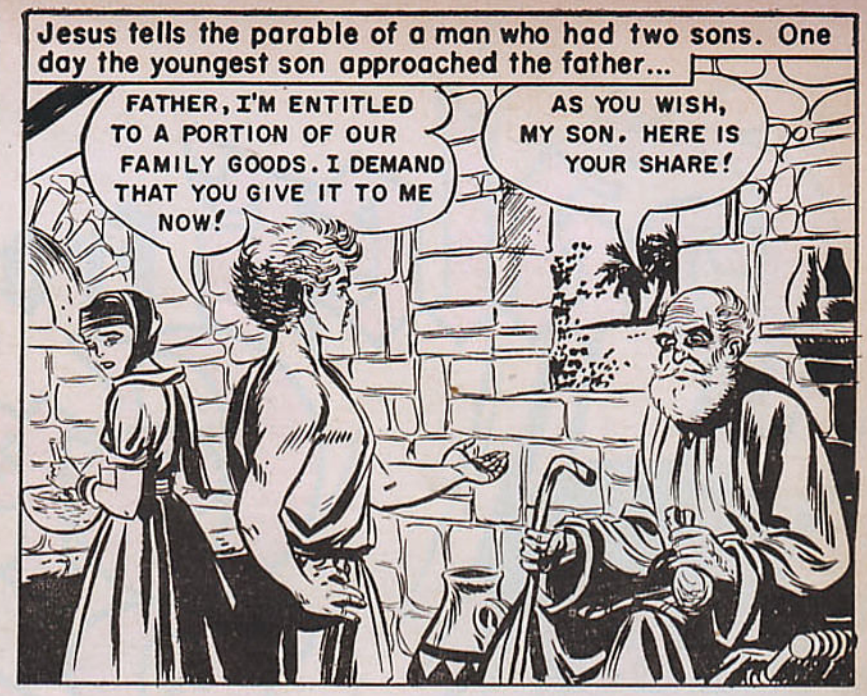
No.3 Sept. 10¢

This is a FAMOUS FUNNIES Publication

JOASH
THE BOY KING

THE Prodigal SON

Jesus tells the parable of a man who had two sons. One day the youngest son approached the father...



But the son didn't spend his money wisely. He journeyed to a far country and squandered it on riotous living...

And then a famine came to the land. To keep from starving, the son got a job feeding swine...

So the Prodigal Son returned to his father...

And when the older brother saw that his father had welcomed the Prodigal Son he became angry...

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Tales from the Great Book
JOASH
THE BOY KING
by John Lehti
JEHU HAS OBEYED GOD'S ORDERS TO DESTROY ALL WHO WORSHIP PAGAN GODS AND HAS KILLED AHAZIAH, KING OF JUDAH... NOW QUEEN ATHALIAH, AHAZIAH'S WICKED MOTHER, SEES A CHANCE TO GAIN THE THRONE HERSELF....SHE STARTS HER EVIL PLAN....
WE MUST KILL EVERY MALE HEIR OF DAVID NOW—BEFORE ONE CAN BE CROWNED.. THUS I SHALL GAIN THE THRONE FOR MYSELF!
AND WE SHALL ALL LIVE IN SPLENDOR!
COME, WHILE THE PALACE SLEEPS... WE MUST BEGIN THE EXECUTIONS!
SILENTLY, THE SWORDSMEN GO FROM ROOM TO ROOM... SWIFTLY ...GRIMLY.
NOT ONE MUST REMAIN ALIVE!
YOU HEARD OUR QUEENS ORDERS... ALL OF THEM!
WE HAVE FINISHED THEM ALL—EVERY ROYAL PRINCE OF DAVID'S HOUSE IS DEAD!
HAS THE BABY, JOASH, BEEN SLAIN?
NO...WHERE DOES HE SLEEP?

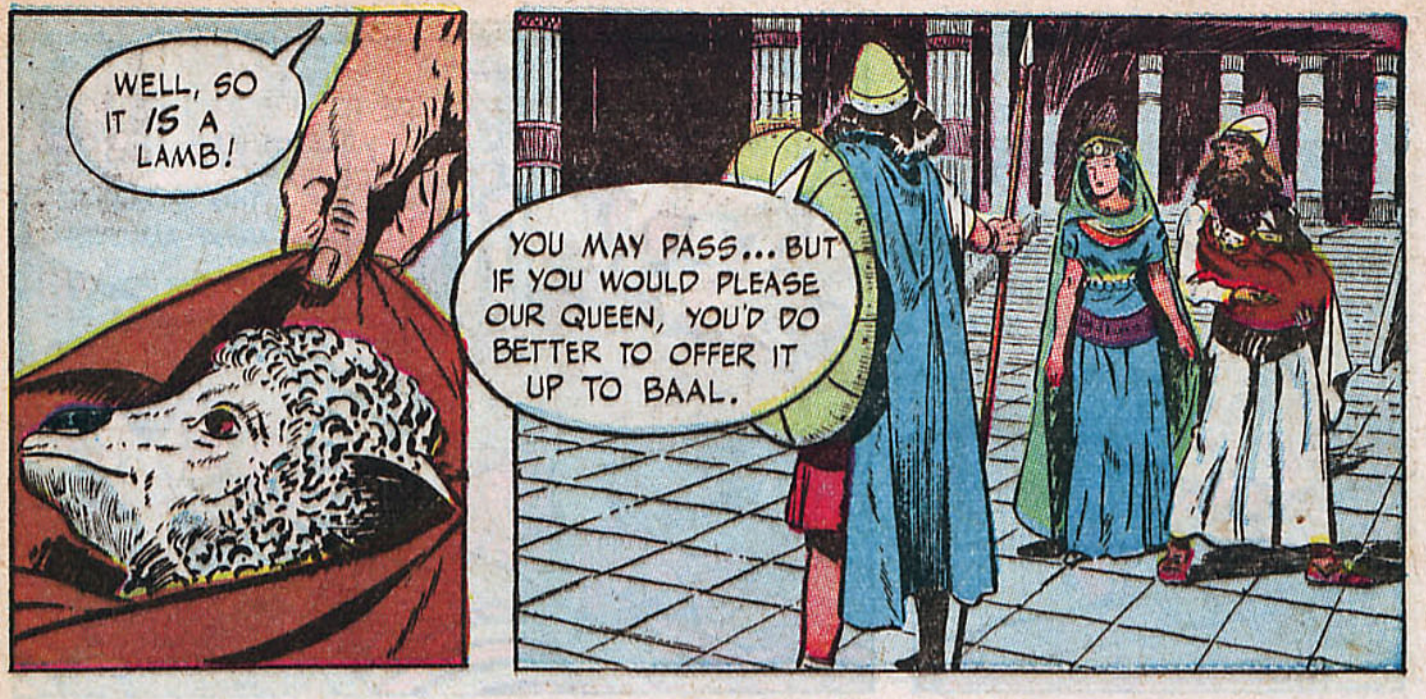
... MEANWHILE, JOASH'S AUNT JEHOSHEBA HASTENS IN AN ATTEMPT TO SAVE THE BABY PRINCE'S LIFE....

JEHOSHEBA, THE WIFE OF JEHOIADA, THE PRIEST, AND JOASH'S AUNT, IS UNABLE TO SLEEP... WALKING ON AN OUTSIDE PORCH, SHE OVERHEARS....
THE BRAT IS IN THE ROOM AT THE END OF THIS CORRIDOR!
KILL HIM QUICKLY— SO WE CAN END THIS NIGHT!
I..I MUST SAVE THE BABY, JOASH!
IT IS A GRIM RACE BETWEEN A GENTLE WOMAN AND A HUSKY, HEALTHY SOLDIER—WITH DEATH AS THE JUDGE!
THEY SHALL NOT HARM YOU!
THERE HE IS—THE LAST OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID!
2

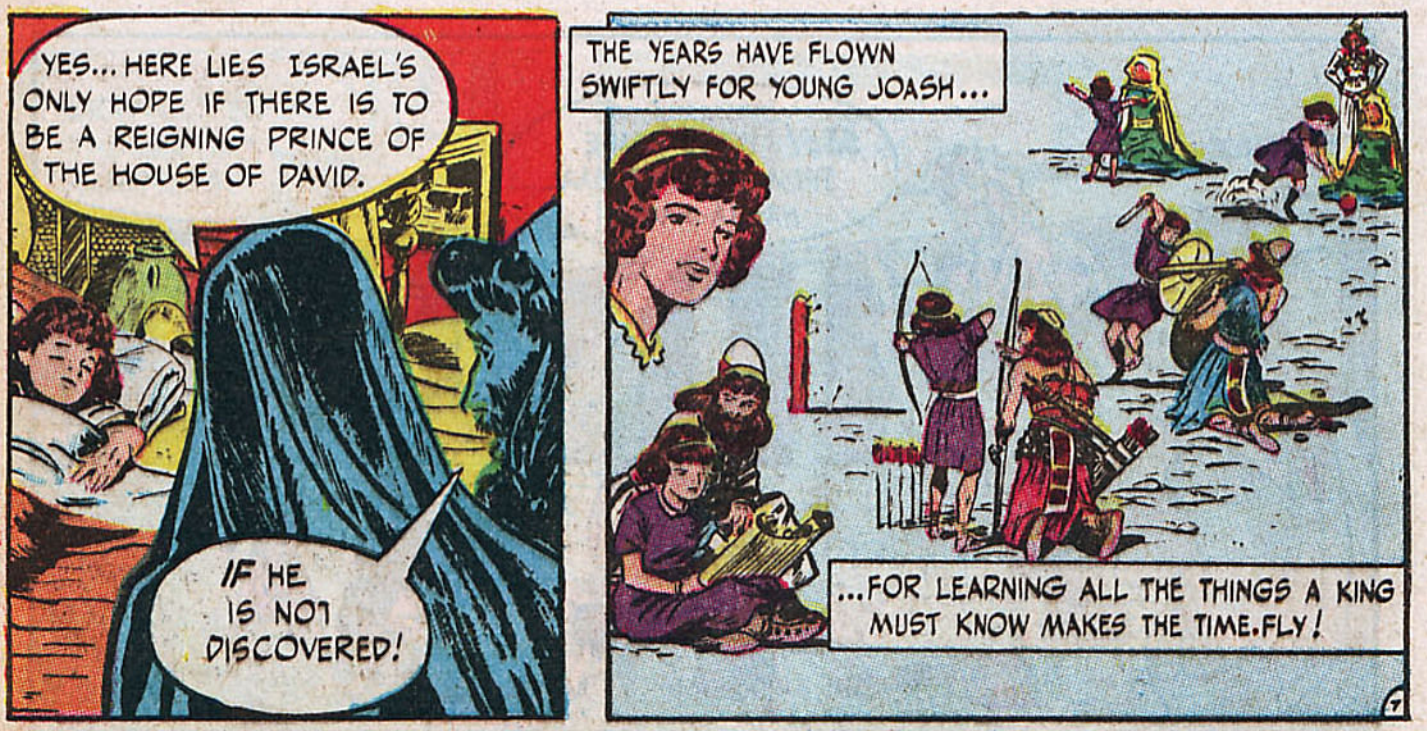
NO QUESTIONS! JUST PRAY MY HUSBAND, JEHOIADA IS ABLE TO DELAY QUEEN ATHALIAH IN OPENING THE DOOR!
IN THE CORRIDOR...
I PRAY, YOUR HIGHNESS, LET US NOT WASTE TIME HERE... WE ARE LATE FOR THE COURT FUNCTIONS NOW!
JEHOIADA, YOU ARE AS TIRESOME AS THE OTHER PRIESTS!
BESIDES, JEHOIADA IS THE YOUNG BOY'S UNCLE, MY QUEEN!
OPEN THE DOOR!
RELUCTANTLY, JEHOIADA OBEYS....
DA-DA-DA!
4

SO!
WH..WHAT DOES MY QUEEN WISH?
WHO IS THIS?
IT IS ONLY MY CHILD- LITTLE RUTH.
A GIRL? LET ME SEE!
SO IT IS!... FOR A MOMENT I THOUGHT... WELL, NEVER MIND— LET US LEAVE!
I FORGOT THERE WERE SERVANTS' CHILDREN IN THE PALACE.
WHERE..WHERE IS YOUNG JOASH?
WE WERE HIDDEN HERE.
6

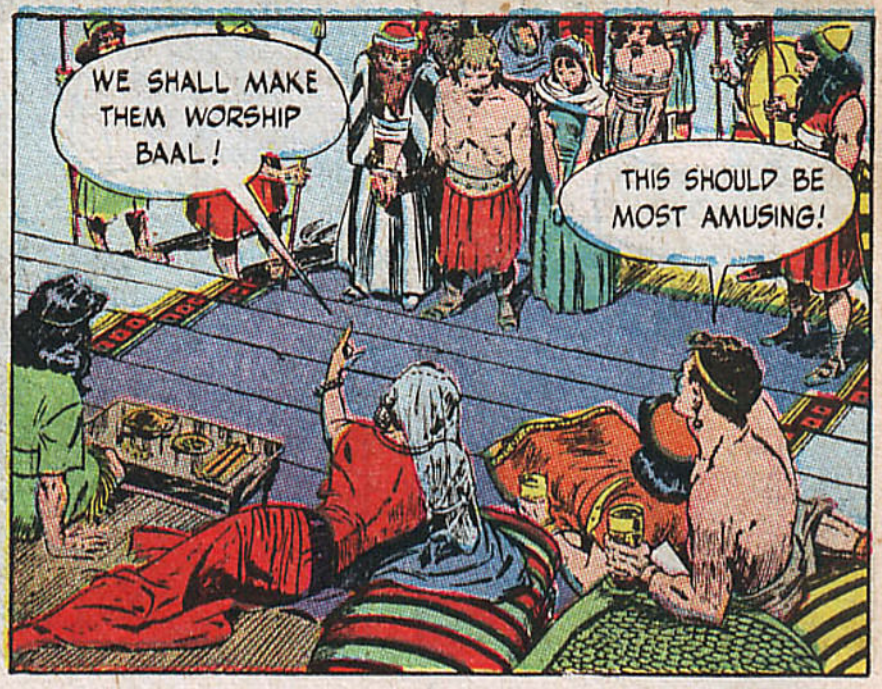
GOD HAS HELPED US SAVE THE PRINCE!
BUT WE MUST NOT TAKE FURTHER CHANCES. JOASH MUST BE WELL HIDDEN FROM THIS MOMENT ON!
THAT NIGHT, JEHOSHEBA AND JEHOIADA DECIDE TO HIDE JOASH IN THE TEMPLE... THE ONE PLACE WHERE PAGAN ATHALIAH HARDLY EVER ENTERS!
WE MUST BE VERY CAREFUL... ATHALIAH'S GUARDS ARE EVERYWHERE!
HALT!
WHAT DO YOU WANT IN THE TEMPLE AT THIS HOUR?
I AM JEHOIADA, THE HIGH PRIEST. MY WIFE AND I HAVE COME TO PRAY.
THEN WHAT DO YOU HIDE THERE UNDER THE CLOAK?
ONLY A YOUNG LAMB FOR A SACRIFICE.
I MUST SEE TO MAKE SURE... THE QUEEN'S ORDERS.
6



* Fictional portions in this story are included to depict ancient daily customs. However these parts do not change in any way, nor are they contrary to, the true biblical account which may be read in II KINGS, Chap. 11 and II CHRONICLES, Chap. 22:10-12 and Chap. 23:1-17.



MEANWHILE, QUEEN ATHALIAH HAS BEEN ENJOYING HER WICKED RULE...
WHERE ARE THOSE STUPID WORSHIPERS OF GOD? GUARDS, BRING THEM HERE!


WE SHALL MAKE THEM WORSHIP BAAL!
THIS SHOULD BE MOST AMUSING!

MANY FAITHFUL BELIEVERS OF THE TRUE GOD ARE BROUGHT FORTH FOR QUEEN ATHALIAH AND HER WICKED GUESTS' AMUSEMENT!
BOW DOWN TO BAAL!
NEVER!
WE'LL MAKE THEM BOW!

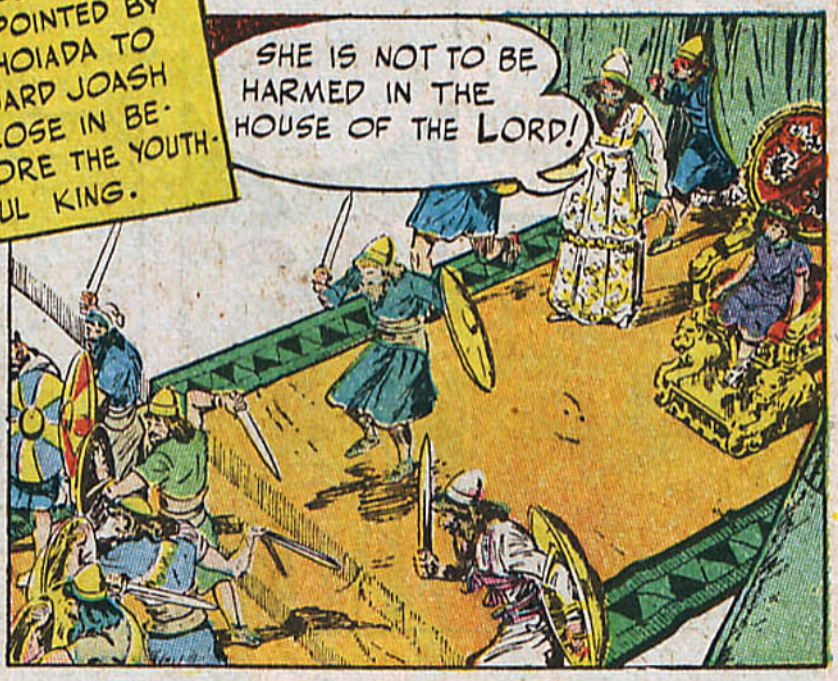
YOU HEARD OUR GLORIOUS QUEEN - BOW, YOU DOGS!

SEE! WE'VE MADE THEM WORSHIP BAAL... HA-HA-HA!

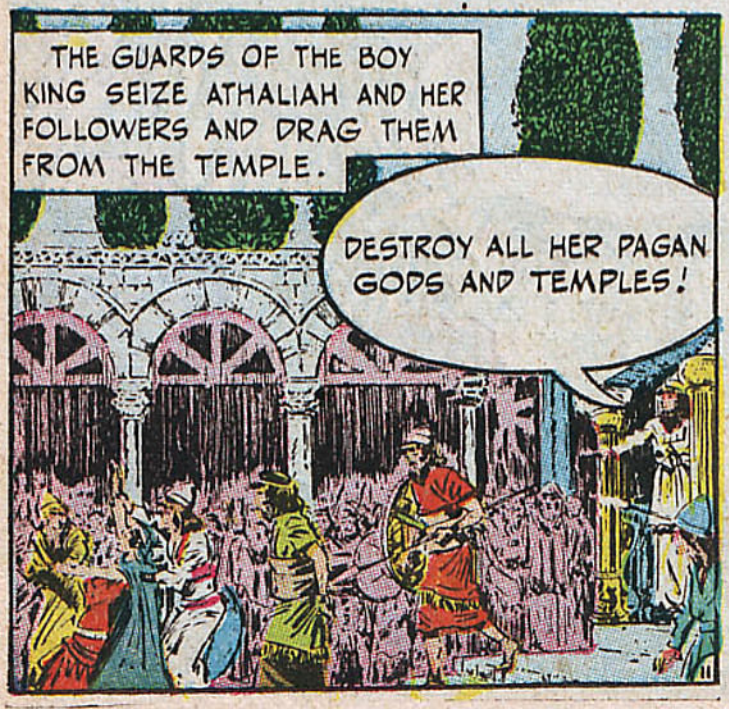
THE SOUND OF THIS CRUEL REVELRY REACHES THE YOUNG EARS OF JOASH, WHO HAS BEEN LEFT ALONE BRIEFLY.
WHAT CAN ALL THAT NOISE BE?... I'D BETTER SEE.
HA! WE SHALL TURN THEM ALL INTO BELIEVERS OF BAAL YET, YOUR HIGHNESS!
EEE-E-E-EE!
WHO IS THAT BOY? WHAT PRINCE IS HE?
YOU SEEM TO KNOW HIM, JEHOIADA.... SPEAK UP! WHAT PRINCE IS HE?
NO PRINCE, OH QUEEN. JUST THE SON OF ONE OF MY VISITORS... I SHALL RETURN HIM TO HIS PARENTS IMMEDIATELY.
HURRY LAD, BEFORE THE QUEEN SUSPECTS!
REALIZING HE MUST ACT QUICKLY BEFORE HIS PLANS ARE DISCOVERED, JEHOIADA SUMMONS ALL THOSE PRIESTS AND GUARDS WHO ARE LOYAL TO HIS CAUSE AND YOUNG JOASH....

....AND A COUNCIL OF WAR IS HELD IN A DEEP UNDERGROUND CHAMBER OF THE TEMPLE!
THE TIME HAS COME TO PROCLAIM OUR RIGHTFUL KING.
A THIRD OF YOU SHALL GUARD THE KING, ANOTHER SHALL BE AT THE GATE OF SUR, AND THE REST AT THE GATE BEHIND THE GUARD.
BUT WHAT SHALL WE USE AS WEAPONS?
HERE! THESE ARE THE WEAPONS OF DAVID'S OWN SOLDIERS... HIDDEN AWAY FOR MANY YEARS— TAKE AND USE THEM WELL! NOW EVERY MAN TO HIS POST!
IN THE SPLENDOR OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE, SEVEN-YEAR-OLD JOASH IS ANOINTED KING OF JUDAH.
GOD SAVE THE KING!
BUT THE SHOUTS AND BLARING OF TRUMPETS REACH THE EARS OF QUEEN ATHALIAH, AND SHE HURRIES TO THE TEMPLE.
THIS IS TREASON!.. TREASON!

...BUT THOSE APPOINTED BY JEHOIADA TO GUARD JOASH CLOSE IN BEFORE THE YOUTHFUL KING.



THE SMALL GROUP OF PERSONAL GUARDS MOVES TO SEIZE JOASH AS ATHALIAH HAS ORDERED...



THUS DOES THE HIGH PRIEST, JEHOIADA, SAVE THE HOUSE OF DAVID FROM EXTINCTION AND GIVE TO JUDAH ITS RIGHTFUL RULER...THE BIBLE TELLS US THAT YOUNG JOASH RULED IN JERUSALEM FOR FORTY YEARS AND DID ALL THAT WAS RIGHT IN THE EYES OF THE LORD.

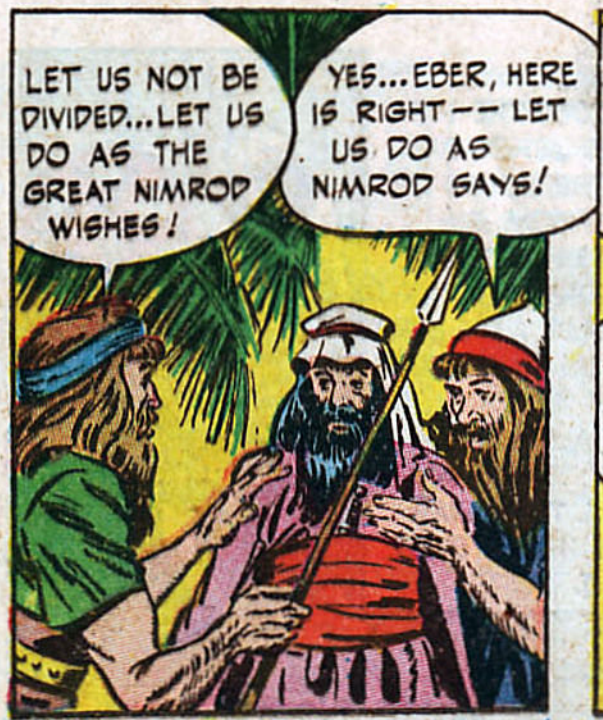
Tales From The Great Book

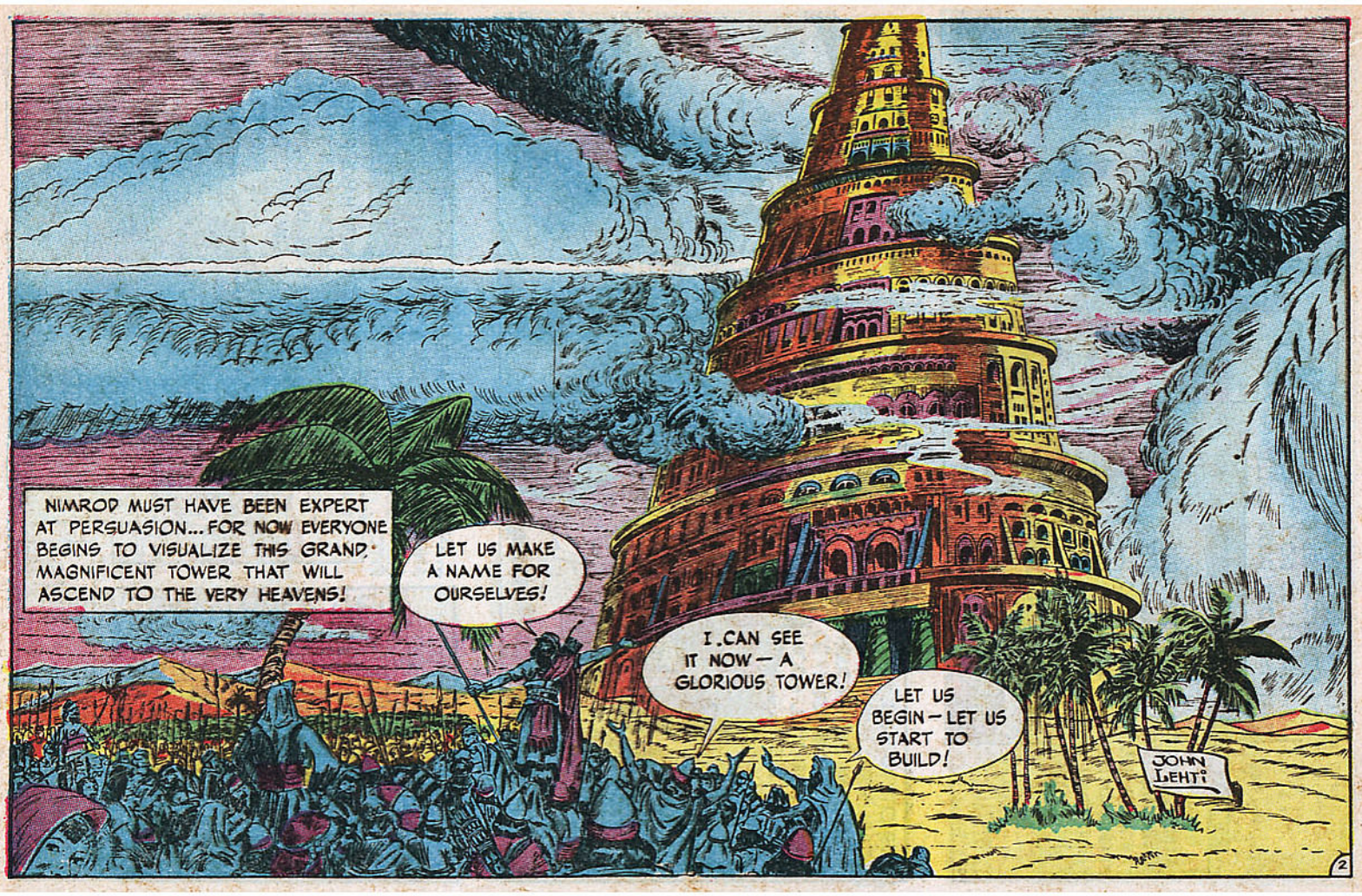
THE TOWER OF BABEL

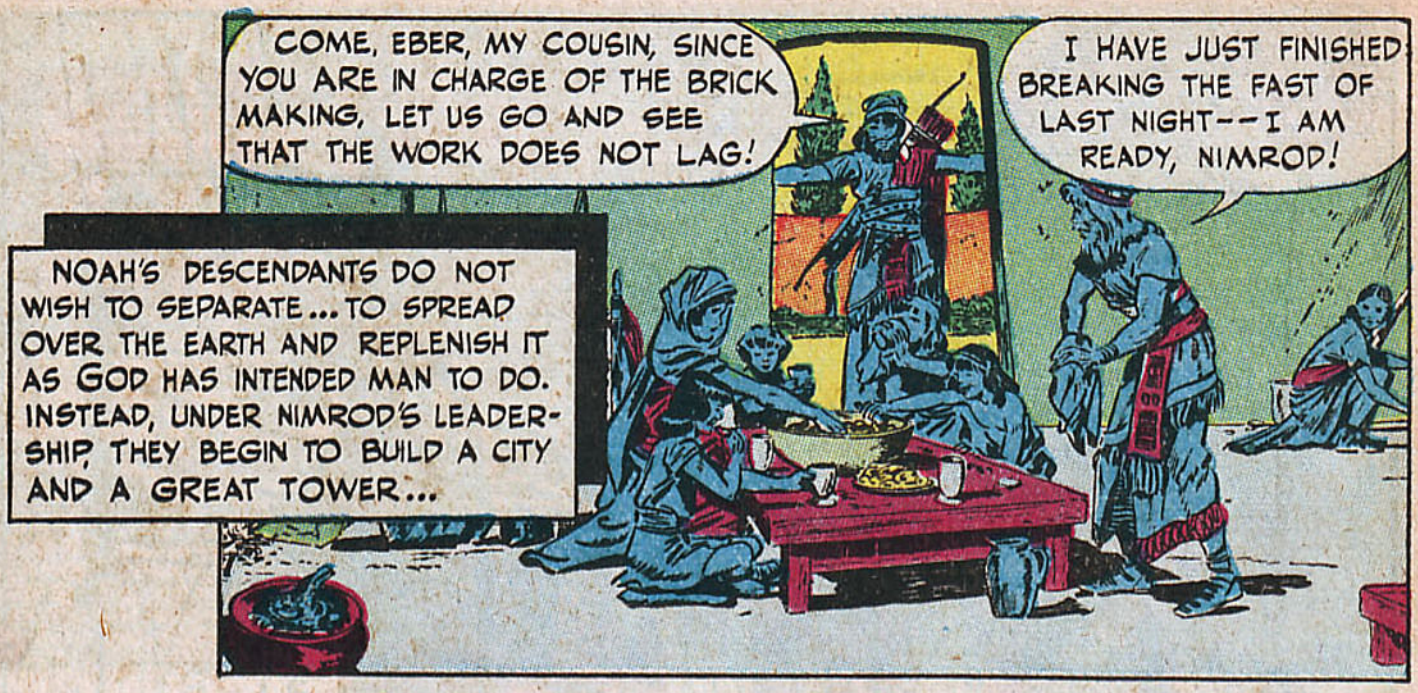
by John Lehti

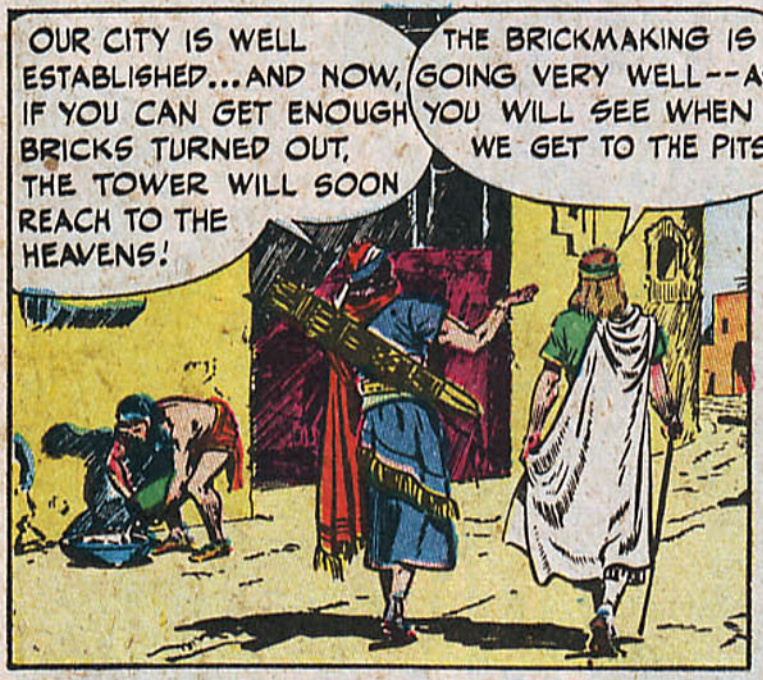
AFTER THE GREAT FLOOD, THE DESCENDANTS OF NOAH BEGIN MIGRATING EASTWARD UNTIL THEY COME TO THE BEAUTIFUL AND FERTILE PLAIN OF SHINAR.

Portions of this story, included to show every-day life and customs of ancient times, have been based on historical research. These portions, though unrecorded in the Bible, are not contrary to, nor do they change in any way, the biblical account which may be read in GENESIS, Chap. 11: 1-9



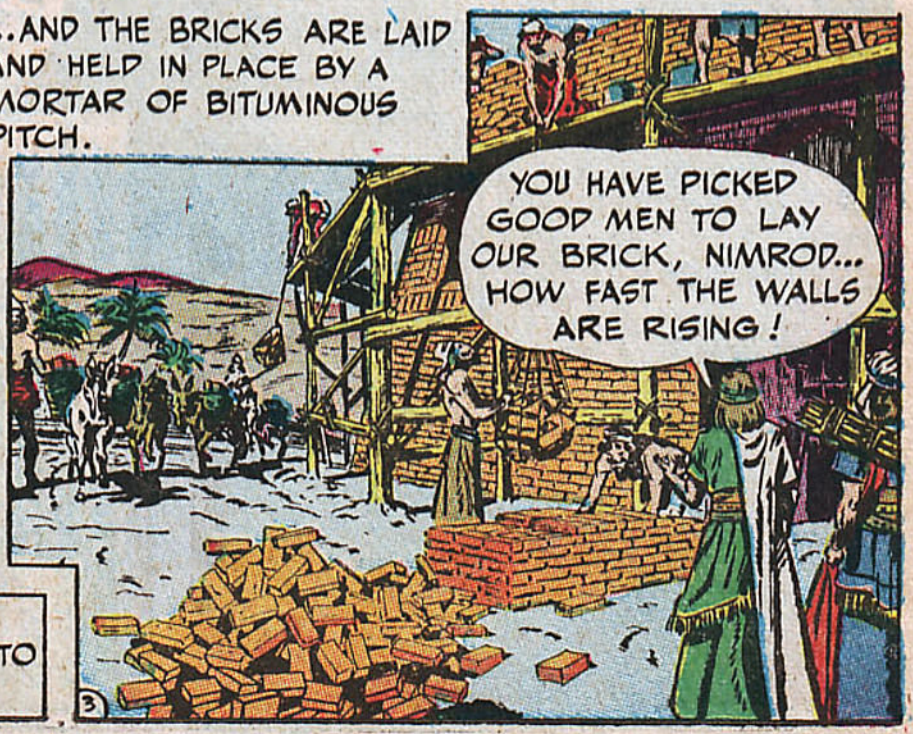

NIMROD MUST HAVE BEEN EXPERT AT PERSUASION... FOR NOW EVERYONE BEGINS TO VISUALIZE THIS GRAND, MAGNIFICENT TOWER THAT WILL ASCEND TO THE VERY HEAVENS!
LET US MAKE A NAME FOR OURSELVES!
I CAN SEE IT NOW — A GLORIOUS TOWER!
LET US BEGIN — LET US START TO BUILD!
JOHN LEHTI
2





THE METHODS ARE CRUDE... WILD STRAW TROD INTO THE CLAY BY BARE FEET, THEN SHAPED INTO BRICKS WITH HAND-MOLDS AND DRIED IN THE SUN....

...AND THE BRICKS ARE LAID AND HELD IN PLACE BY A MORTAR OF BITUMINOUS PITCH.



...THEN THE HEAVY LOADS OF FINISHED BRICK ARE CARRIED TO THE SITE OF THE TOWER...

YES... BEFORE LONG OUR TOWER WILL REACH TO THE SKIES!

WE CAN **ALL** BE PROUD OF IT!

AND PROUD WE WILL BE! NO ONE WILL WANT TO LEAVE HERE NOW---WE WILL BE UNITED FOREVER!

BUT THE LORD SEES WHAT THEY ARE DOING AND IS NOT PLEASED... "BEHOLD, THEY ARE ONE PEOPLE... AND THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING OF WHAT THEY WILL DO... NOTHING THAT THEY PROPOSE TO DO WILL NOW BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR THEM."

"COME, LET US GO DOWN AND THERE CONFUSE THEIR LANGUAGE, THAT THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND ONE ANOTHER'S SPEECH."

THEN, THE FOLLOWING EVENTS ON THE TOWER MIGHT VERY WELL HAVE HAPPENED LIKE THIS, AS EBER INSPECTS THE WORK...

SIMEON, DON'T PILE YOUR BRICKS SO HIGH ON THE SCAFFOLD. THEY MIGHT FALL OVER!

WHAT KIND OF TALK IS THIS? HAVE YOU GONE CRAZY FROM THE HEAT?

EBER'S GONE MAD--HE'S NOT MAKING SENSE!

"LET US... CONFUSE THEIR LANGUAGE.." SAID THE LORD... AND NOW NO MAN CAN UNDERSTAND THE OTHER.

I CAN'T UNDERSTAND EBER'S CRAZY TALK — GET AWAY FROM ME... *YOU'RE MAD!*

LOOK OUT FOR THE BRICKS!

OW!!

THEY'VE GONE CRAZY UP THERE! TALKING STRANGE AND THROWING BRICKS AT US!

I'VE GOT TO DEFEND MYSELF AGAINST THESE MADMEN!

EVERYBODY SEEMS TO HAVE LOST HIS MIND

I-I *MUST* GET AWAY — THERE'S NOT A SANE MAN ON THE TOWER BUT MYSELF!

WITHIN MINUTES, THE ENTIRE TOWER OF BABEL IS OVERRUN WITH CONFUSION... EACH MAN SPEAKS IN A STRANGE TONGUE... A LANGUAGE THE OTHERS HAVE NEVER HEARD... AND EACH THINKS EVERYONE ELSE HAS LOST HIS MIND!

THE DISPERSAL OF THE PEOPLE MAY WELL HAVE HAPPENED LIKE THIS, AS EBER RUNS TO HIS HOME...
COME, M-MY WIFE! PACK OUR HOUSEHOLD QUICKLY! WE MUST LEAVE HERE... IMMEDIATELY!
BUT WHY, MY HUSBAND?
EVERYONE HAS GONE MAD!..RANTING IN STRANGE WEIRD WORDS...WE MUST LEAVE BEFORE SOME HARM COMES TO US!
NOBAH AND HIS FAMILY ARE PACKING, TOO!
WE CAN'T GO SOUTH...NOBAH IS HEADED THAT WAY...AND HE'S AS CRAZY AS THE REST! WE'LL GO TO THE MOUNTAINS... SURELY NONE WILL FOLLOW US THERE!
SEE, NOBAH...EBER AND HIS FAMILY GO TO THE MOUNTAINS! WE'LL BE SAFE IN THE SOUTH!
BE THANKFUL! FOR NONE ARE MORE CRAZY THAN EBER!
LATER, IN THE MOUNTAINS...
EBER, WE HAVE NOT YET NAMED OUR YOUNGEST CHILD!
HA-HA! WHAT STRANGE THINGS OCCUPY A WOMAN'S MIND EVEN IN MOMENTS OF GREAT DISTRESS--BUT WE SHALL NAME HIM PELEG, IN MEMORY OF THE DAY OUR PEOPLE WERE DISPERSED AND DIVIDED!
THUS, THE TOWER OF BABEL REMAINS AN UNFINISHED MONUMENT TO MAN'S FUTILE ATTEMPTS TO DEFY GOD'S WISHES.
Portions of this story, included to show every-day life and customs of ancient times, have been based on historical research. These portions, though unrecorded in the Bible, are not contrary to, nor do they change in any way, the biblical account which may be read in GENESIS, Chap. 11: 1-9

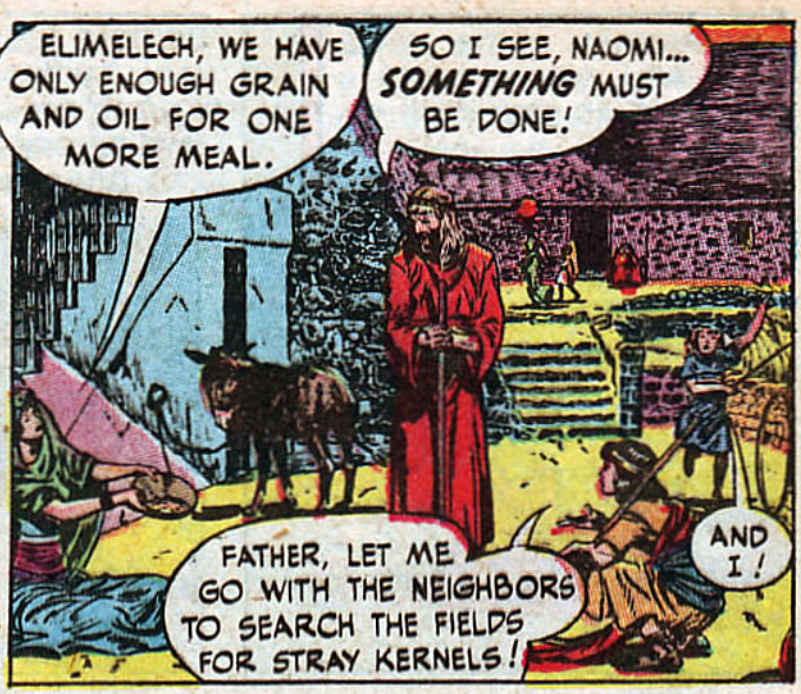
Tales of the Great Book

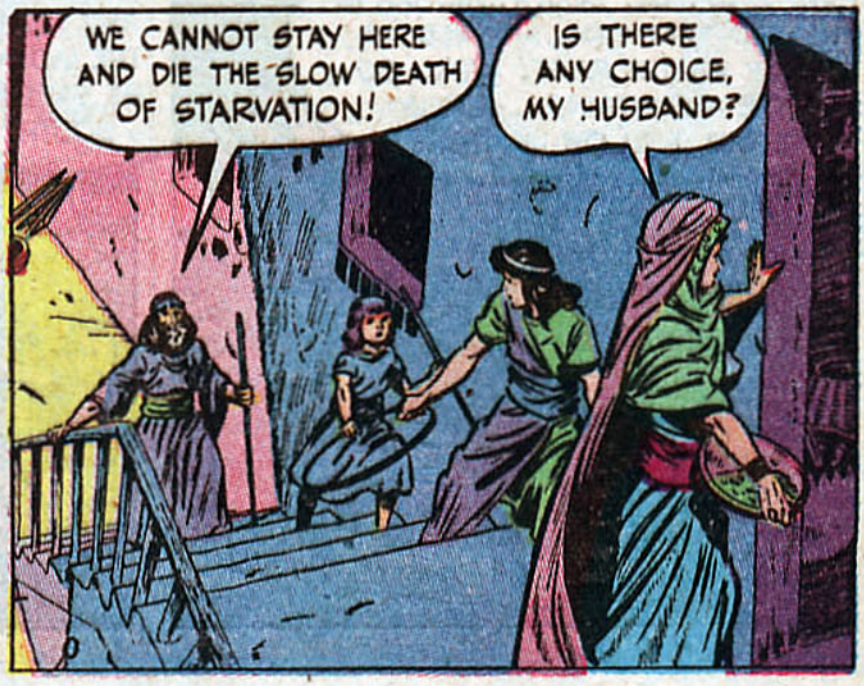
THE UNSELFISH LOVE OF RUTH

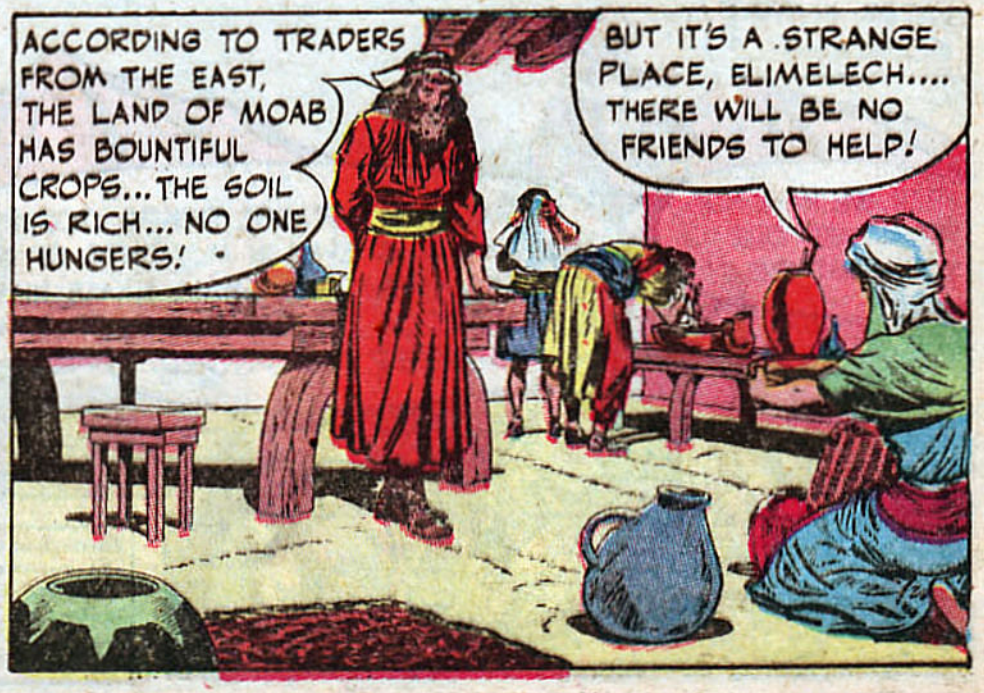
by John Lehti

• IN THE TIME OF THE JUDGES, A FAMINE • GRIPS ALL JUDAH...IN THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM, ELIMELECH AND HIS FAMILY MAY HAVE DISCUSSED IT SOMEWHAT LIKE THIS....

Portions of this story, included to show every-day life and customs of ancient times, have been based on historical research. These portions, though unrecorded in the Bible, are not contrary to, nor do they change in any way, the biblical account which may be read in the book of RUTH, Chap. 1:1-17.







WILL... WILL WE GO THERE?
LET'S DO, FATHER! SUCH EXCITEMENT... TRAVEL...CAMELS... STRANGE COUNTRIES!!
NOW, NOW..BOYS!
YOUR FATHER IS ONLY THINKING... IT COSTS SO MUCH FOR SUCH A JOURNEY....AND WE HAVE NOTHING!
NOTHING BUT A PLAN IN MY HEAD, NAOMI... A PLAN—AND A STRONG BACK AND WILLING ARMS TO HELP MAKE IT COME TRUE!
YES....WE SHALL LEAVE JUDAH AND GO TO MOAB—SO THAT OUR CHILDREN SHALL NOT STARVE!
AS YOU WISH IT, ELIMELECH!
BUT YOU ASK FREE TRANSPORTATION FOR TWO AND ONLY OFFER YOURSELF AS A CAMEL DRIVER...THAT IS NOT A FAIR BARGAIN!
I HAVE NO ONE ELSE...MY ELDEST SON IS NOT BIG ENOUGH!
HE IS BIG ENOUGH TO HELP WITH THE DONKEYS! I MUST HAVE A WORKER FOR EVERY FREE TRAVELER!
THERE'S NO OTHER CHOICE THEN!
IT IS AGREED...MY SON MAHLON AND I SHALL WORK AS DRIVERS IN RETURN FOR THE PASSAGE OF MY WIFE AND YOUNG CHILION AND FOUR SILVER PIECES TO BE PAID US AT THE JOURNEY'S END!
IF YOU MAKE GOOD DRIVERS!
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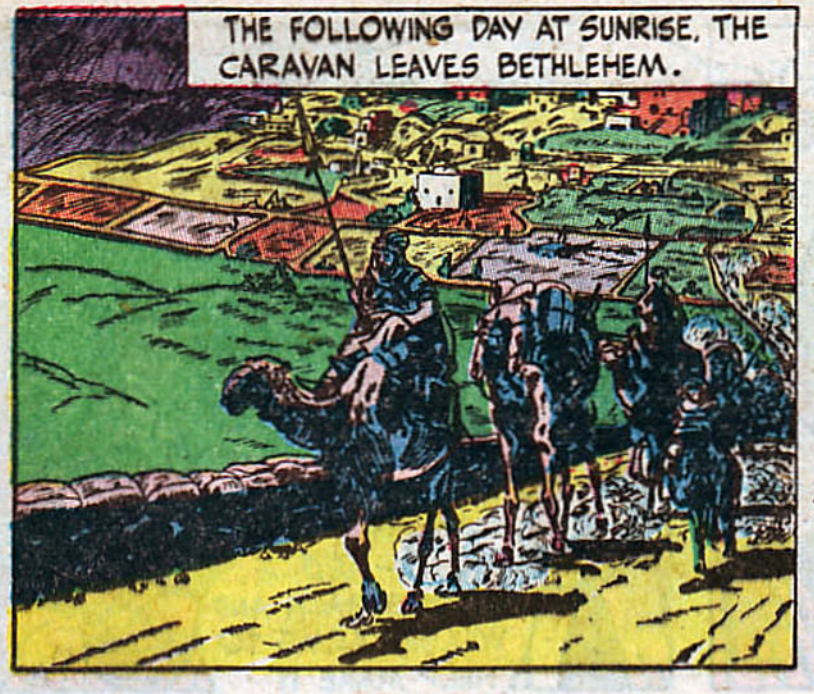
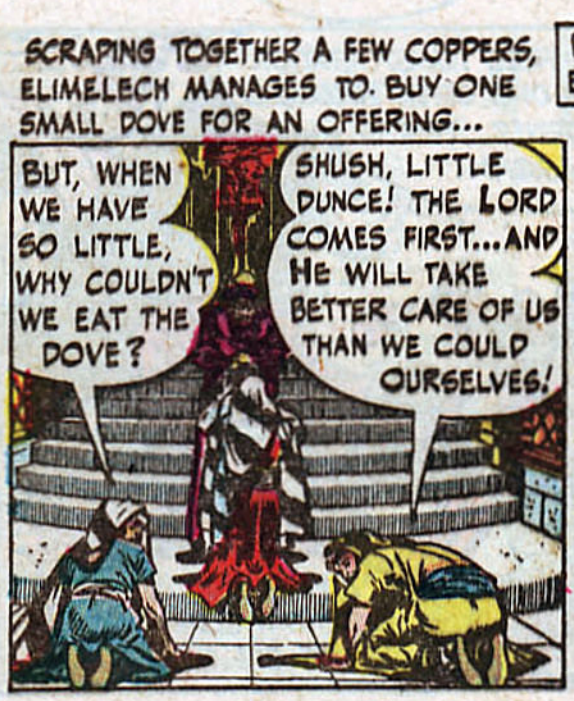

THE FOLLOWING DAY AT SUNRISE, THE CARAVAN LEAVES BETHLEHEM.

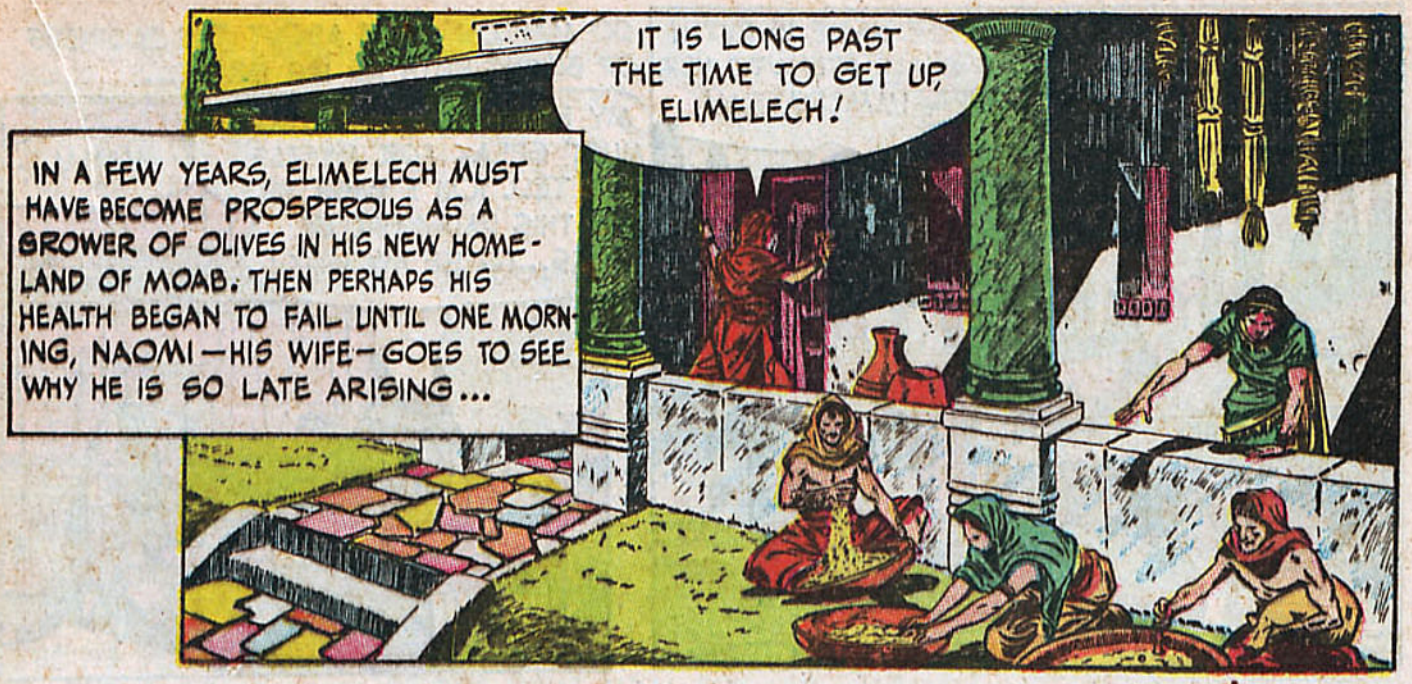
THEN THEY FOLLOW A WELL-KNOWN TRADE ROUTE NORTH TO JERUSALEM.
WE SHALL STOP TO TRADE HERE!
GOOD! THAT GIVES US TIME TO VISIT THE TEMPLE!


SCRAPING TOGETHER A FEW COPPERS, ELIMELECH MANAGES TO BUY ONE SMALL DOVE FOR AN OFFERING...
BUT, WHEN WE HAVE SO LITTLE, WHY COULDN'T WE EAT THE DOVE?
SHUSH, LITTLE DUNCE! THE LORD COMES FIRST...AND HE WILL TAKE BETTER CARE OF US THAN WE COULD OURSELVES!

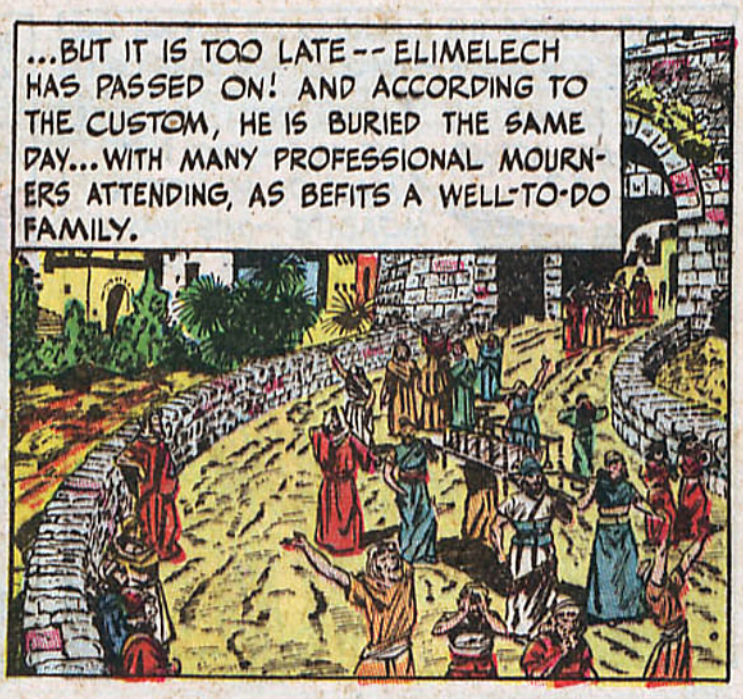
DANGERS LURK AT ALL TIMES ALONG THE TRADE ROUTES... ESPECIALLY NEAR THE UNINHABITED RUINS OF ANCIENT JERICHO...
SEE! IT WOULD BE A RICH CARAVAN FOR US BRIGANDS TO CAPTURE!
BUT TOO LARGE AND TOO WELL GUARDED...WE MUST LET IT PASS!

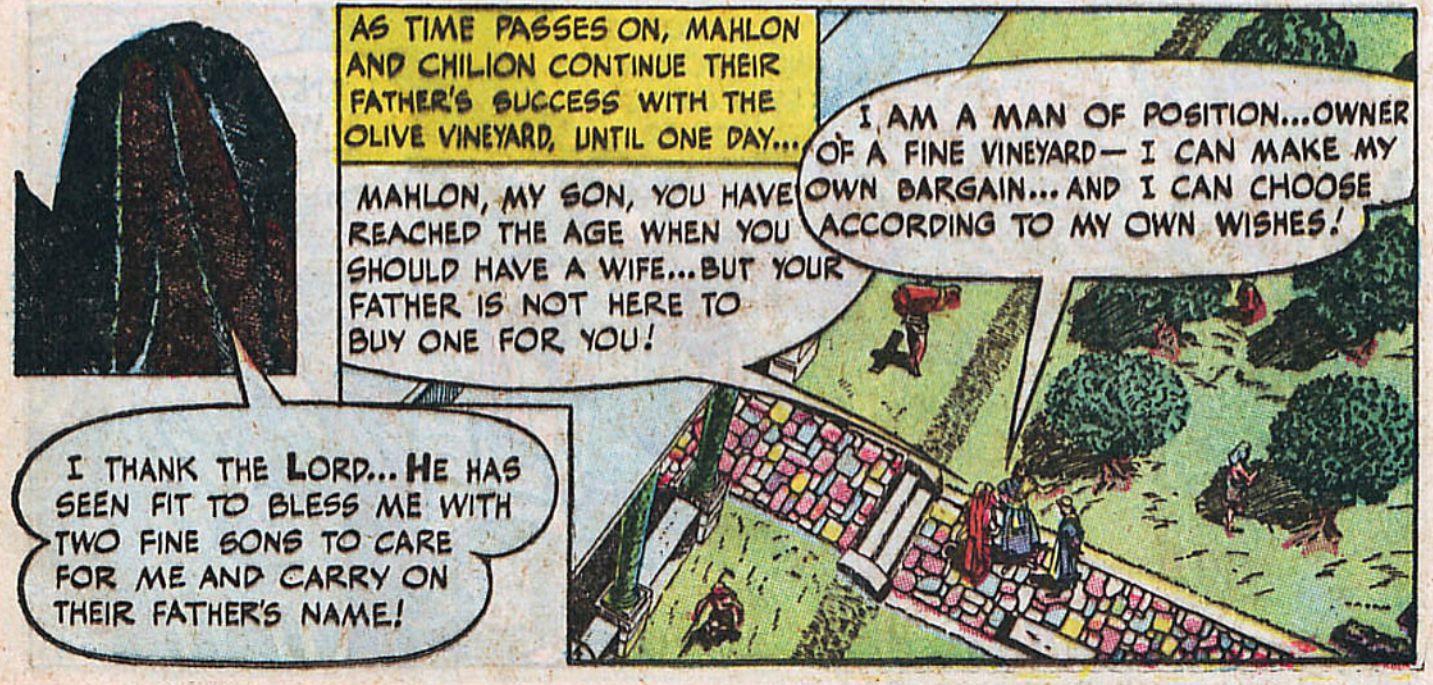
AT LAST, MANY WEEKS LATER, THE CARAVAN CROSSES THE RIVER ARNON.
THERE... THERE IT IS, NAOMI! THE LAND OF MOAB!
I THINK IT IS BEAUTIFUL, ELIMELECH...

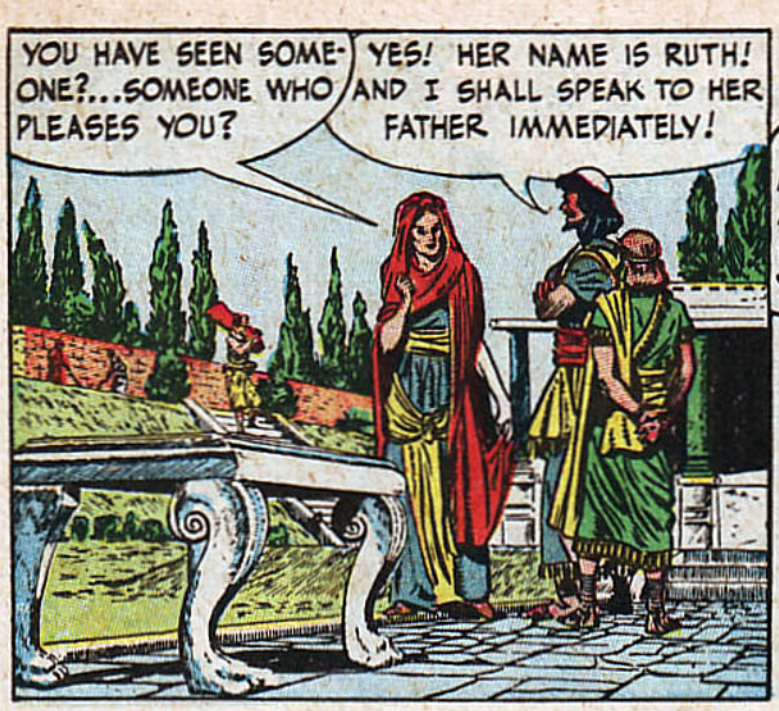
YES...BUT THAT IS NOT ALL YOU ARE THINKING?
I CANNOT HELP BUT WONDER WHAT IS AHEAD FOR US IN THIS STRANGE LAND! WHETHER WE WILL BE HAPPY WE CAME...OR—


IT IS LONG PAST THE TIME TO GET UP, ELIMELECH!
IN A FEW YEARS, ELIMELECH MUST HAVE BECOME PROSPEROUS AS A GROWER OF OLIVES IN HIS NEW HOME-LAND OF MOAB. THEN PERHAPS HIS HEALTH BEGAN TO FAIL UNTIL ONE MORNING, NAOMI—HIS WIFE—GOES TO SEE WHY HE IS SO LATE ARISING...

MAHLON! CHILION! COME... QUICK!


...BUT IT IS TOO LATE -- ELIMELECH HAS PASSED ON! AND ACCORDING TO THE CUSTOM, HE IS BURIED THE SAME DAY... WITH MANY PROFESSIONAL MOURNERS ATTENDING, AS BEFITS A WELL-TO-DO FAMILY.


AS TIME PASSES ON, MAHLON AND CHILION CONTINUE THEIR FATHER'S SUCCESS WITH THE OLIVE VINEYARD, UNTIL ONE DAY...
MAHLON, MY SON, YOU HAVE REACHED THE AGE WHEN YOU SHOULD HAVE A WIFE... BUT YOUR FATHER IS NOT HERE TO BUY ONE FOR YOU!
I AM A MAN OF POSITION... OWNER OF A FINE VINEYARD— I CAN MAKE MY OWN BARGAIN... AND I CAN CHOOSE ACCORDING TO MY OWN WISHES!
I THANK THE LORD... HE HAS SEEN FIT TO BLESS ME WITH TWO FINE SONS TO CARE FOR ME AND CARRY ON THEIR FATHER'S NAME!



SO MAHLON GOES ABOUT THE BUSINESS OF BUYING RUTH AS HIS BRIDE...

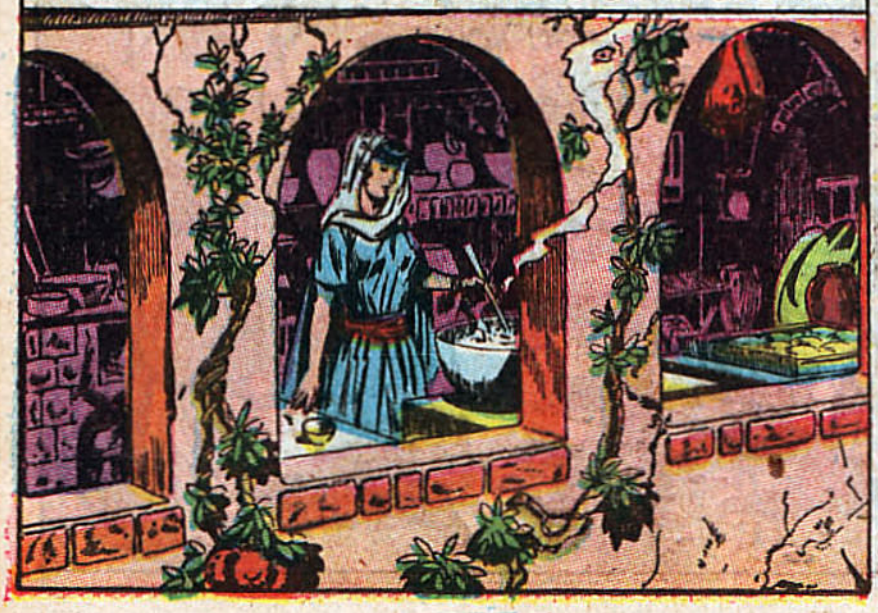
THE WEDDING CEREMONY IS BRIEF...THEN, DURING THE TRADITIONAL FEAST, RUTH AND MAHLON DRINK FROM THE SAME GLASS, WHICH IS SHATTERED AFTERWARD.

MAY YOUR CHILDREN BE AS PLENTIFUL AS THE OLIVE BRANCHES.

...SO RUTH BECOMES A MEMBER OF ELIMELECH'S FAMILY... AND, AS IN EVERY DAY AND AGE, WHAT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN A BRIDE'S FIRST MEAL FOR HER HUSBAND?

IF SUCH AN INCIDENT EVER OCCURRED...IF RUTH EVER DID TRY TO COOK A SURPRISE FOR HER HUSBAND- SHE PROBABLY SHOPPED VERY DILIGENTLY, LIKE THIS....

RUTH SMILES HAPPILY AS SHE GOES ABOUT HER TASKS... ANTICIPATING MAHLON'S COMPLIMENTS ON HER COOKING.

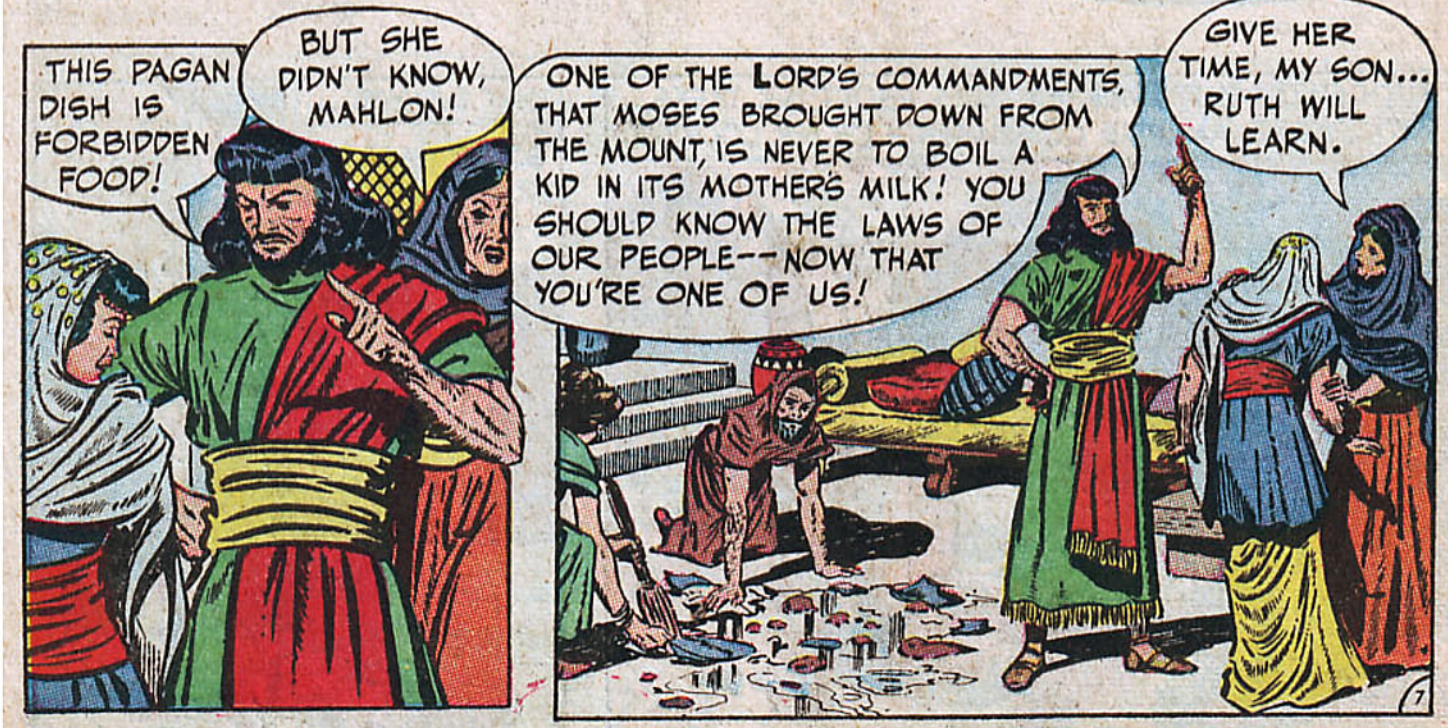


THAT EVENING...

WH-WHAT IS THIS?
A MOST DELICIOUS DISH—YOUNG KID BOILED IN ITS MOTHER'S MILK!

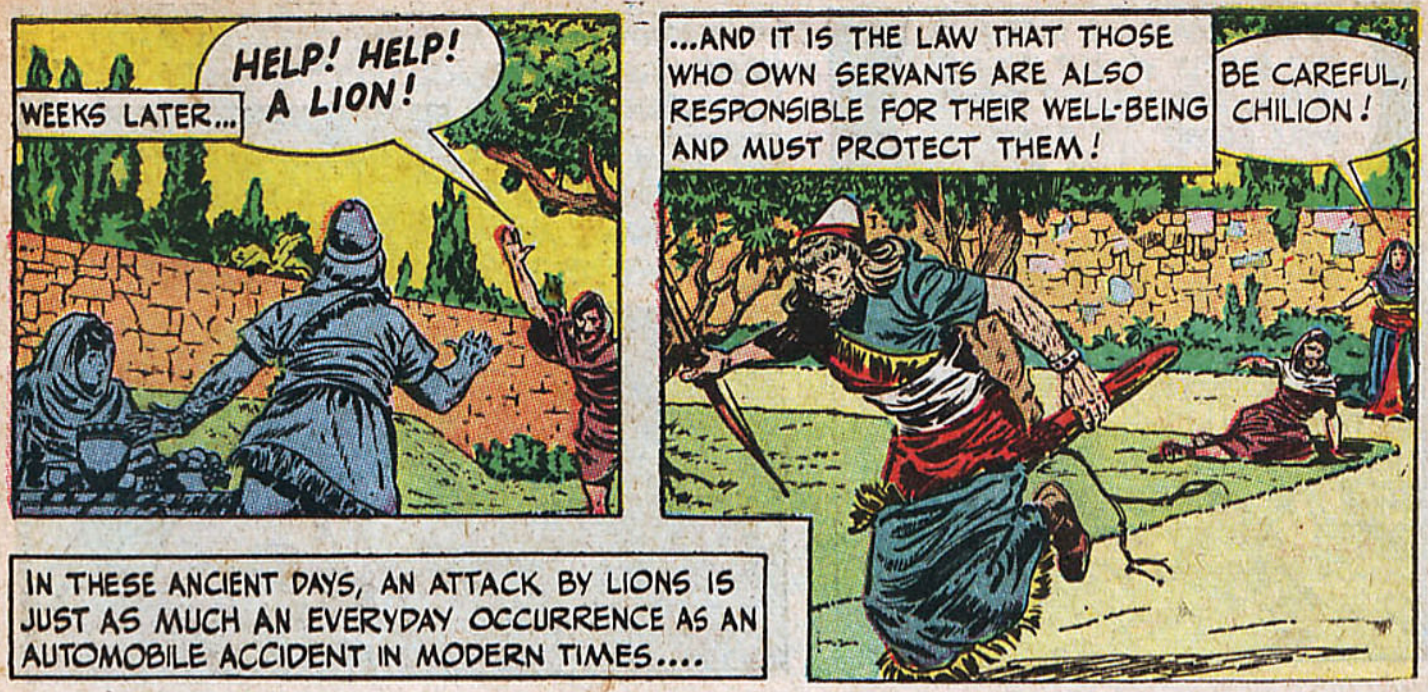
HOW DARE YOU!

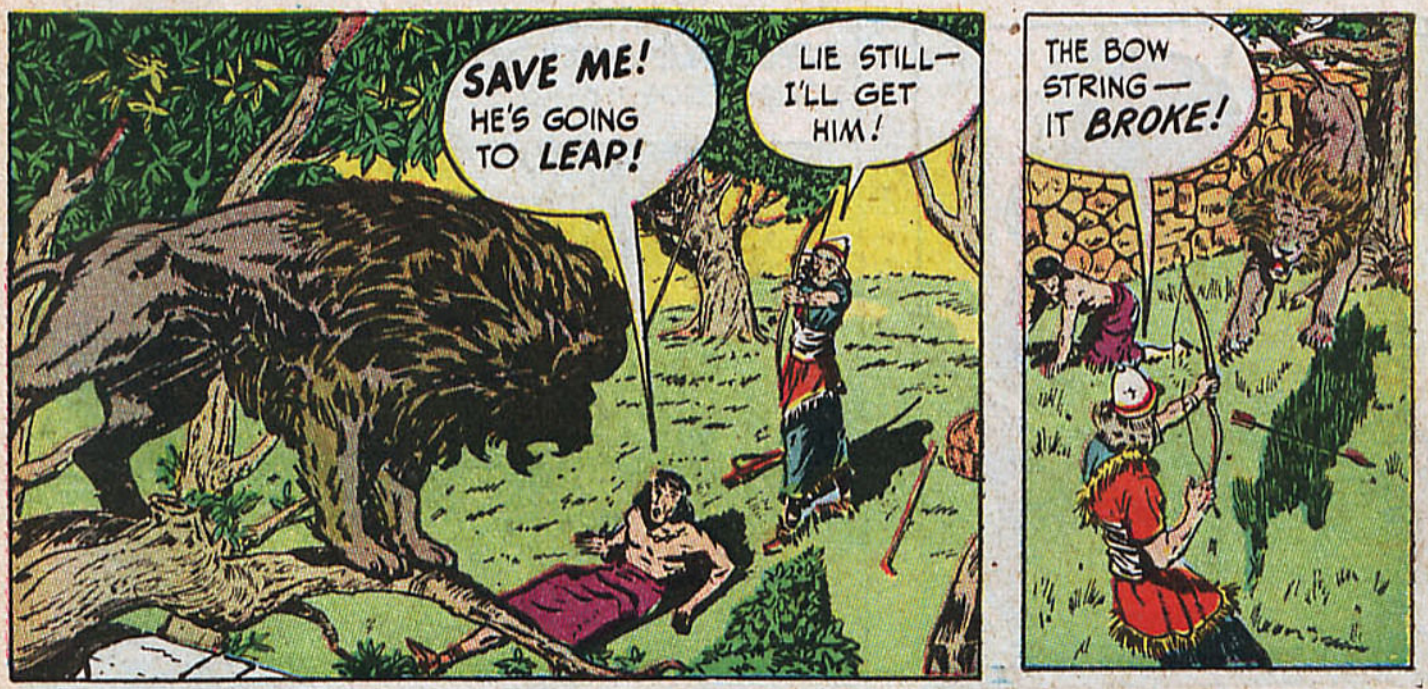
HOW DARE YOU SERVE US SUCH FOOD!
BUT IN THIS COUNTRY IT'S A GREAT DELICACY!


THIS PAGAN DISH IS FORBIDDEN FOOD!
BUT SHE DIDN'T KNOW, MAHLON!
ONE OF THE LORD'S COMMANDMENTS, THAT MOSES BROUGHT DOWN FROM THE MOUNT, IS NEVER TO BOIL A KID IN ITS MOTHER'S MILK! YOU SHOULD KNOW THE LAWS OF OUR PEOPLE--NOW THAT YOU'RE ONE OF US!
GIVE HER TIME, MY SON... RUTH WILL LEARN.

THIS WAS HER FIRST DAY AT COOKING—AND OUR WAYS ARE NOT HER WAYS.
I'M SORRY, MAHLON...I ONLY WANTED TO SHOW MY LOVE FOR YOU BY PREPARING THE DELICIOUS FOOD WE MOABITES OFFER UP TO THE GODS!
PERHAPS THAT IS WHY WE ARE FORBIDDEN THE FOOD--FOR WE MUST NOT PARTAKE OF ANYTHING CONNECTED WITH THE WORSHIP OF PAGAN GODS!
NO MAN KNOWS FOR SURE—ENOUGH FOR US THAT IT IS THE LAW!
AS TIME PASSES, RUTH DOES LEARN THE WAYS OF HER HUSBAND'S PEOPLE... AND CHILION ALSO MARRIES A MOABITE GIRL...THE HOUSE OF ELIMELECH IS FILLED WITH HAPPINESS...
NO FAMILY COULD BE HAPPIER THAN WE!
YES...OUR FUTURE IS SUNNY!
NOT AT ALL LIKE THE STORM CLOUDS GATHERING ON THE HORIZON—EH, CHILION?

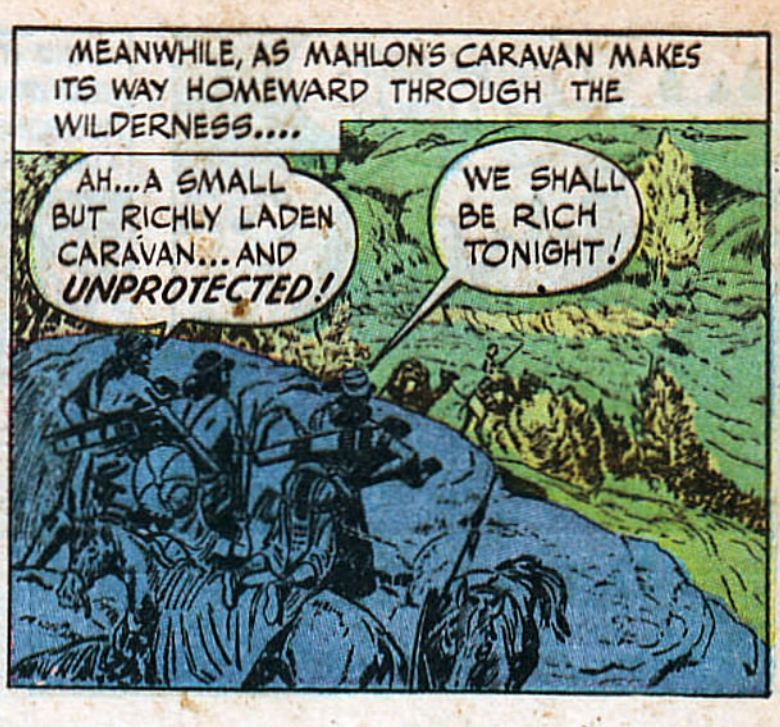
CHILION AND I HAVE MADE A PLAN... TO LEAD A SMALL CARAVAN TO SELA IN THE SOUTH.
THAT'S WHERE THE REAL BIG PROFITS ARE—IN TRADING!
AS TIME PASSES BY RUTH AND HER MOTHER-IN-LAW, NAOMI, GROW VERY FOND OF EACH OTHER... THINGS HAVE GONE WELL AND, ALTHOUGH THE BIBLE DOESN'T SAY SO, MAHLON AND CHILION MIGHT VERY WELL HAVE WANTED TO IMPROVE THEIR CONDITION EVEN MORE SO...
IF YOU WISH IT, MAHLON, IT IS ENOUGH FOR ME!
EVERYTHING WE HAVE IS INVESTED IN THIS CARAVAN!
BUT A SUCCESSFUL TRIP TO SELA AND BACK SHOULD PAY OFF ALL WE'VE HAD TO BORROW FROM OUR CREDITORS AND DOUBLE OUR PROFITS BESIDES!
WE HAVE ARRANGED CREDIT WITH THE MERCHANTS HERE--BOTH FOR YOUR HOUSEHOLD NEEDS AND TO FINANCE THE CARAVAN!
WHEN WILL YOU LEAVE, MY HUSBAND?
AT DAWN, TOMORROW!
NEXT MORNING, MAHLON'S CARAVAN STARTS SOUTH
I SHALL BE WAITING ANXIOUSLY, MY DEAR HUSBAND!
AND I SHALL KEEP THE OLIVE GROVES PRODUCING TILL YOU RETURN.
MAY GOD BE WITH YOU AND PROTECT YOU, MY SON!


WEEKS LATER...
HELP! HELP! A LION!
...AND IT IS THE LAW THAT THOSE WHO OWN SERVANTS ARE ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR WELL-BEING AND MUST PROTECT THEM!
BE CAREFUL, CHILION!
IN THESE ANCIENT DAYS, AN ATTACK BY LIONS IS JUST AS MUCH AN EVERYDAY OCCURRENCE AS AN AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT IN MODERN TIMES....

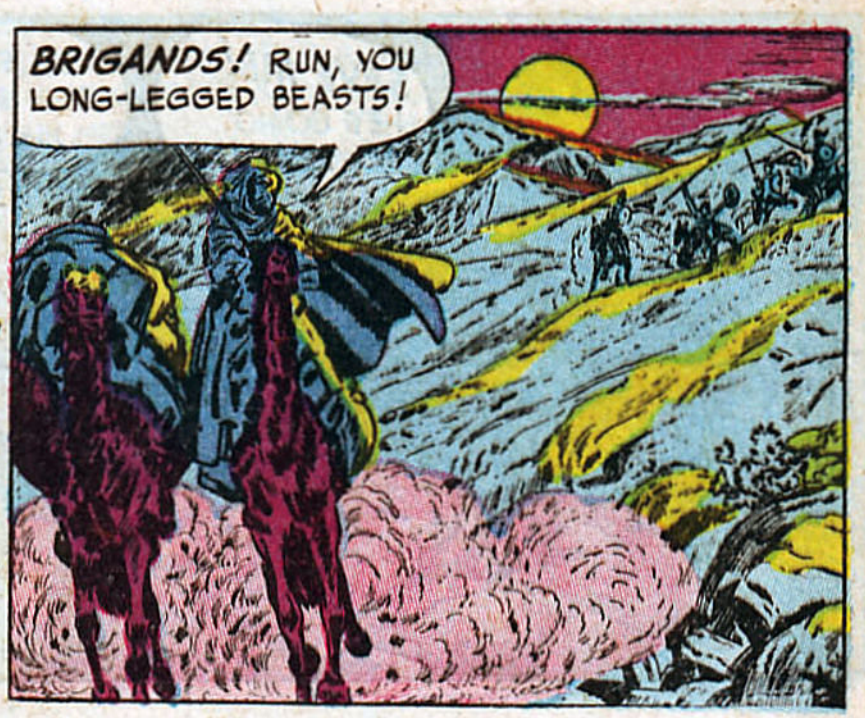

SAVE ME! HE'S GOING TO LEAP!
LIE STILL— I'LL GET HIM!
THE BOW STRING— IT BROKE!

MISTRESS—THE LION HAS KILLED YOUNG CHILION!
MY SON... MY YOUNGEST BOY!
10

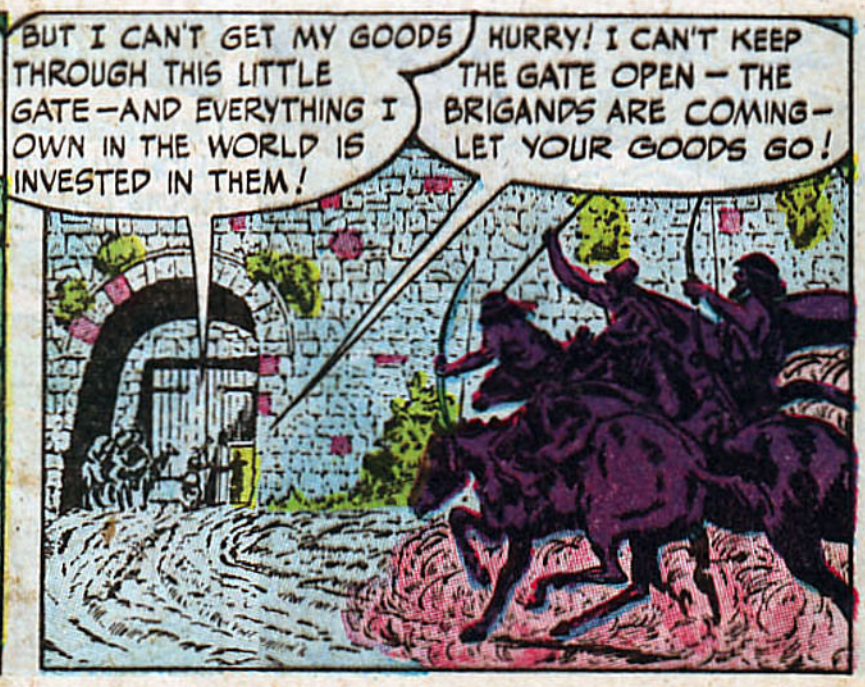
YOUR HUSBAND DIED BRAVELY, ORPAH...DIED WHILE SAVING ANOTHER LIFE... AND IF HIS BOW STRING HADN'T BROKEN, HE MIGHT NOT—
IS THAT ANY HELP TO ME, RUTH? DOES IT BRING HIM BACK TO ME?


MEANWHILE, AS MAHLON'S CARAVAN MAKES ITS WAY HOMEWARD THROUGH THE WILDERNESS....
AH...A SMALL BUT RICHLY LADEN CARAVAN...AND UNPROTECTED!
WE SHALL BE RICH TONIGHT!

LET'S TAKE IT, MEN!

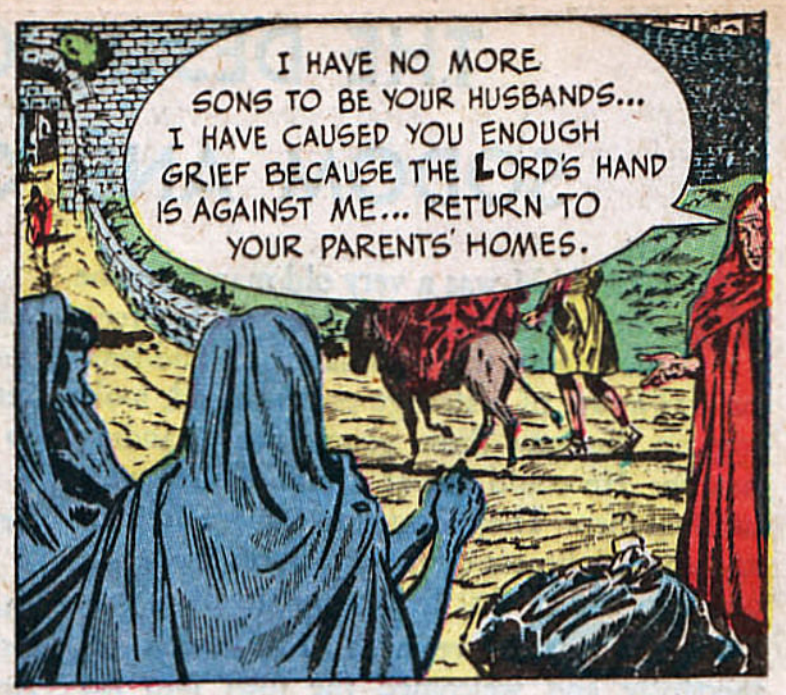

BRIGANDS! RUN, YOU LONG-LEGGED BEASTS!

OPEN THE GATES!
YOU KNOW THE GATES ARE LOCKED FOR THE NIGHT...YOU MUST ENTER BY THE NARROW GATE!

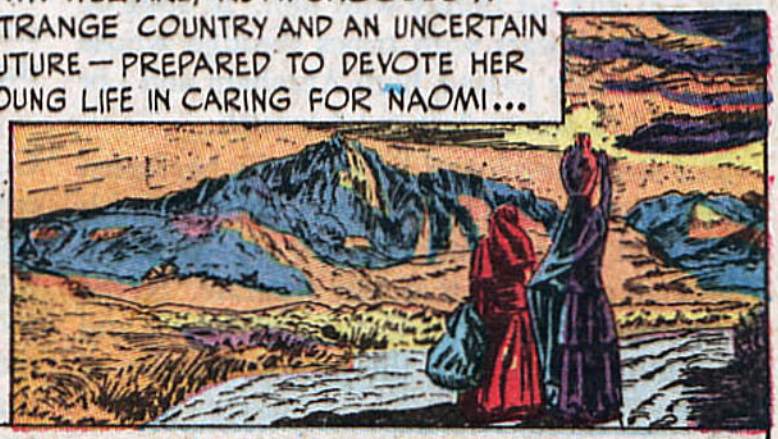

BUT I CAN'T GET MY GOODS THROUGH THIS LITTLE GATE—AND EVERYTHING I OWN IN THE WORLD IS INVESTED IN THEM!
HURRY! I CAN'T KEEP THE GATE OPEN — THE BRIGANDS ARE COMING— LET YOUR GOODS GO!

HELP!
IT'S TOO LATE NOW!
ESCAPING FROM BRIGANDS, RUTH'S HUSBAND—MAHLON—FINDS THE CITY GATES LOCKED FOR THE NIGHT AS HE ATTEMPTS TO SAVE HIS GOODS, THE RUFFIANS OVERPOWER HIM OUTSIDE THE WALLS...THIS MIGHT VERY WELL HAVE BEEN THE WAY HE DIED—FOR BRIGANDS WERE COMMONPLACE IN ANCIENT TIMES...
HE...HE IS DEAD!
MY HUSBAND!
SURELY THE LORD HAS SET HIS HAND AGAINST US THAT WE SHOULD BE VISITED WITH SO MUCH TRAGEDY!
AS SOON AS WORD OF THE CATASTROPHE SPREADS THROUGHOUT THE CITY, CREDITORS DESCEND UPON NAOMI AND HER DAUGHTERS-IN-LAW...
I LOANED YOU MONEY FOR FOOD AND CLOTHING.
AND I FOR THE CARAVAN!
MAHLON OWES ME FOR AN OLIVE PRESS!

AND WE CAN WAIT NO LONGER—WE MUST BE PAID!
WHAT I OWE I SHALL PAY—EVEN IF I MUST SELL MY LAST POSSESSIONS...
NO, NAOMI. PERHAPS MY FAMILY CAN HELP.
NO! IT IS NOT THEIR DUTY, RUTH.
WE MUST BE PAID!
YOU CAN GIVE ME THE OLIVE GROVES AS PAYMENT FOR WHAT YOU OWE ME!
THESE FURNISHINGS WILL SATISFY ME!
WHATEVER YOU SAY. I HAVE NO CHOICE.
BUT HOW WILL YOU LIVE, NAOMI--WHERE?
I HAVE HEARD THE FAMINE IN ISRAEL IS ENDED...THERE IS NOTHING TO KEEP ME HERE NOW—SO I SHALL RETURN TO BETHLEHEM.
RETURN, EACH OF YOU, TO YOUR OWN MOTHER'S HOUSE...AND MAY THE LORD BE KIND TO YOU!
SURELY WE WILL GO WITH YOU TO YOUR PEOPLE.
13



SO, WITH NO THOUGHT FOR HER OWN WELFARE, RUTH CHOOSES A STRANGE COUNTRY AND AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE—PREPARED TO DEVOTE HER YOUNG LIFE IN CARING FOR NAOMI...



...THIS PURE, UNSELFISH LOVE DISPLAYED BY RUTH.. —WHAT BETTER EMOTION COULD THE WORLD ASK FOR IN THE GIRL DESTINED TO BECOME ANCESTRESS OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID...THE WOMAN WHOM THE DISTANT FUTURE WOULD CLAIM AS THE EARTHLY ANCESTRESS OF — JESUS OF NAZARETH!

THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH

ABRAHAM was a very old man when he sat one day at the door of his tent, dozing in the noonday sun. Suddenly he was aware of a strange presence and, looking up, he saw three young men standing nearby. He could see at a glance they were unusual men. They seemed to radiate holiness and the brightness of their features made the old man realize that they were angels.

Abraham was overjoyed. He bowed respectfully and welcomed the men into his dwelling. They agreed to stay for dinner and the old man gave them the best he had to eat and drink.

Just before they left, Abraham asked the angels where they were going.

"To Sodom and Gomorrah," they answered.

The angels told him that the two cities had sunk to the lowest depths of wickedness, that the people had completely abandoned themselves to sin.

"The Lord has become very angry," said one angel. "Because the people have forsaken God, the cities will be completely destroyed."

When the three strangers had departed, Abraham trembled with fear and sorrow. His nephew, Lot, and his entire family lived in Sodom.

Years before, when Abraham, following God's instructions, left his home in Ur, he took Lot and his family with him. In spite of famines and wars with tribes through whose territories they passed, both Abraham and Lot managed to accumulate great wealth.

But strife developed between the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot and the land on which they lived was no longer able to support them. Abraham suggested that they separate. So the old patriarch moved to Canaan while Lot and his family moved into the prosperous city of Sodom.

Shortly afterward war broke out between the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah and the other kings in the area. After a long and severe war the kings of the two cities were killed and the inhabitants, including Lot and his family, were taken captive.

Hearing of his nephew's fate, Abraham organized an army and set out against his captors. Defeating the enemy in battle, Abraham rescued Lot and his family and restored them to their former possessions in Sodom.

So you see, Abraham must have loved his nephew very much.

But once they were free from the threat of enemy kings, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah returned to their old wicked ways. And now God was angry and had decided to rain destruction upon the cities.

Fearful for the life of his beloved nephew, Abraham fell down on his knees and raised his eyes heavenward in supplication.

"Oh Lord," he prayed, "will you also destroy the righteous with the wicked?"

And then he heard the voice of the Lord. "If there are fifty good men still left in Sodom," He said, "then the city will be spared."

Abraham had heard stories of the terrible wickedness in the cities. It could very well be that not even fifty good people could be found there.

"And what if there are only forty-five good people, oh Lord—what then?"

Then God reduced the number from fifty to forty-five, to forty, to thirty, then twenty and finally promised that he would spare the cities if even ten good people could be found there.

Night had fallen over Sodom when two of God's angels in the forms of men, entered the city. They searched the streets and alleys seeking ten decent people. But all about them they saw nothing but sin and wickedness and soon realized their search was in vain. Of all the households in Sodom there was only one that lived in goodness and loved the Lord—and that was the family of Lot.

Later that night, Lot was surprised when the two visitors knocked on his door. He looked upon them in awe. They were men, but still there was an unearthly quality about them that made them seem more than men.

Lot invited them in and made them welcome.

Not long afterward a loud hammering of fists and clubs nearly broke down the door. Then shouts and curses were heard. A mob was attacking the house.

The mob had heard that two strangers were in town and they wanted Lot to deliver them to their violence. But Lot wouldn't open the door and refused to turn over his two visitors to the bloodthirsty men outside. The angry mob stormed the house with increased vigor; they pressed against the door and windows. But all through this violent scene the two strangers prayed quietly with no sign of fear.

Then, just when the mob was on the point of breaking down the door, their angry shouts gave way to cries of terror. The hand of the Lord had fallen upon them and every one of the attackers was struck blind. They grovelled on the ground, they screamed and cursed and groaned.

As the mob retreated, the angels told Lot to gather his family and prepare to leave the city.

"But why?" stammered Lot.

"We could not find even ten decent men in Sodom and Gomorrah," said the angels. "Now the cities will be destroyed."

Lot stood dumfounded. He hesitated.

"Hurry," insisted the angels. "We have no time to lose!"

When Lot told his family the tragic news, they were not inclined to believe him. Then he sternly ordered his wife and two daughters to pack their valuables and prepare to leave immediately. Reluctantly they agreed. But the daughters' husbands mocked Lot and refused to go.

"You superstitious fool!" they laughed. "You'll be back in the morning when you find that nothing happened to the city."

"Hurry!" urged the strangers.

Shortly afterward, Lot and his wife and two daughters followed the angels out through the gates of the city. When they were some distance away, the angels stopped them.

"No matter what happens," they commanded, "don't look back. Don't look back to see what is happening behind you!"

In the dark quiet hours of early morning, Lot and his party were far on the road to the nearby town of Zoar. Some time had passed now and they heard nothing, no sound of destruction behind them. Lot began to have misgivings. What if this were a false alarm? His sons-in-law would tease him unmercifully when he returned to the city.

Suddenly, the ground trembled and a great roaring noise almost shattered their eardrums. A violent, orange, blinding light surrounded them. The earth shook so that they were almost thrown to their feet and they stood quaking with fear as earth and sky erupted in fury.

They heard a loud hissing and crackling as fire consumed the cities. They heard buildings topple and the frantic screams from the stricken inhabitants.

Lot had to summon every ounce of his self-control to keep from turning his head. "Don't look back," the angels had warned. But the temptation was great.

In fact the temptation was *too* great for Lot's wife. Her curiosity got the best of her. She could hear the devastation, she could see the crimson skies in front of her and above her. Behind her? It must be an awesome sight, something never before seen with human eyes!

One sly glance won't hurt, she told herself. One little peep—the Lord won't know. And like others who have defied the Lord's will before her and after her—she quickly turned her head.

She saw the terrifying holocaust, it was worth the look—or was it? She tried to turn around, but could not. In a moment she saw nothing. Her senses had been stilled forever. She had turned to a pillar of salt.

From far off Abraham saw the flaming skies and smoke and knew that the cities had been laid waste by fire and brimstone. The Lord had made good his promise. So, not even ten good man had been found in the cities. Abraham grieved for his nephew. But he soon learned that his prayers had been answered. With great joy and thanksgiving he heard the news that Lot had been spared.

And so, the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were completely destroyed. Next day only a few swirls of smoke drifted skyward from the smouldering ashes. And today, only the ruins of the ancient cities remain beside the waters of the Dead Sea.

TALES FROM THE GREAT BOOK 3

SEPT. 1955

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